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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretaries-General of United Nations and NATO call on Bosnian parties to cease all offensive military activities and hostile acts immediately.

* General Assembly sets up working group to review proposals to revitalize and reform United Nations system; extends MINUGUA mandate until 18 March 1996.

* Secretary-General says reported incidence of rape and sexual violence in former Yugoslavia has declined, but international community must remain vigilant.

* Member States owed United Nations $3.8 billion as of 31 August; $850 million owed to regular budget and $2.95 billion owed to peace-keeping.

* Department of Humanitarian Affairs receives $500,000 in contributions to assist Caribbean islands devastated by Hurricane Luis.

* UNRWA Commissioner-General expresses concern about reports Palestinians are being forced to leave Libya.

* Review Conference of States Parties to Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to begin in Vienna on 25 September, with focus on problem of land-mines.

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United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Willy Claes today expressed deep concern about the recent intensification of military activities by the Bosnian parties, particularly in the western parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They said they were disturbed by the reported exodus of large numbers of civilians from the affected areas.

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The Secretaries-General called on the parties to immediately cease all offensive military activities and hostile acts in Bosnia. As the United Nations Security Council and the North Atlantic Council had repeatedly emphasized, there could be no military solution to the conflict there. They affirmed their full support for the ongoing efforts to find a political solution which would bring lasting peace throughout the region.

The military situation was active in various parts of Bosnia today, according to a United Nations spokesman. However, reports of large territorial gains by the Bosnian Army and Croatian forces could not be confirmed. As many as 40,000 Bosnian Serbs could have been displaced by the fighting in the north-west part of the country, while another 5,000 could have been affected in the north-east.

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The General Assembly today established an open-ended high-level working group to review proposals to revitalize, strengthen and reform the United Nations system. The working group will conduct its substantive work in the fiftieth session and report no later than 14 September 1996. Assembly President Amara Essy (Cote d'Ivoire) said the consensus resolution reflected the importance Member States attached to enhancing the role of the United Nations. The working group was to be funded from existing resources, supplemented by a trust fund. The trust fund would be used to acquire the services of experts, and Member States should contribute to it.

In other actions, the Assembly renewed the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) until 18 March 1996; confirmed the appointment of Rubens Ricupero of Brazil as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for a four-year term; and decided to place Belarus, as a special interim arrangement, in the group of least developed countries for the purpose of apportioning peace-keeping expenses, thus reducing its assessments for those operations.

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Reports of rape and sexual violence in the former Yugoslavia continue to be received, although to a lesser extent than earlier in the conflict, according to the Secretary-General. In a report to the General Assembly, he stressed that the international community should remain vigilant to ensure that sexual atrocities against women, children and men did not recur on the scale reported in 1992 and 1993.

The Secretary-General said it was difficult to assess the actual numbers of individuals who had been raped or sexually abused as victims were often reluctant to report such experiences. Available information indicated that rape had been committed by all sides. However, the largest number of reported

victims had been Bosnian Muslims, and the largest number of alleged perpetrators had been Bosnian Serbs.

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Member States owed the United Nations a total of $3.8 billion as of 31 August, up from $2.61 billion as of 31 July, according to a spokesman for the Organization. Some $850 million was owed to the regular budget and $2.95 billion was for peace-keeping. The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $527 million to the regular budget and $1.07 billion to peace-keeping. The Russian Federation owed $21 million to the regular budget and $571 million to peace-keeping.

The spokesman noted that some significant payments had been made to the peace-keeping budget this month, including $68 million by Germany, $7 million by Finland, $14.5 million by Sweden and $6 million by Austria. "If other Member States would follow this example we would be very happy," he added.

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The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has received almost $500,000 from donors and governments to assist the Caribbean islands devastated by Hurricane Luis. The islands mainly need reconstruction materials -- particularly for roofing and water supplies -- and generators.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is playing a coordinating role for the Department, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is concerned with water and sanitation problems and vaccinations. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is responding to the overall health situation.

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The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Ilter Turkmen, has expressed concern about reports that Palestinians are having to leave Libya. As a result of the Libyan action, several countries in the Agency's area of operations are imposing restrictions on the entry of Palestinians, even on those who have rights of residence.

Mr. Turkmen said the situation called for immediate attention. UNRWA was ready to provide humanitarian assistance and would strive to prevent hardship for the refugees by intervening with the governments concerned.

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The Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons will take place in Vienna from 25 September to 13

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October. The Conference will focus on the Convention's Protocol on the use of land-mines, which encompasses the use of booby-traps such as exploding toys.

The Review Conference is seen as an important step in efforts to stop or restrict the use of land-mines, which kill or maim 20,000 civilians every year and set back agricultural development and endanger returning refugees. There are an estimated 110 million live mines scattered in 64 countries, and more are being set than are being removed. The Secretary-General highlighted the problem in his 1995 Supplement to An Agenda for Peace.

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